

## Reformation Sunday

**Sermon Title:** “Free From and Free To” (October 24/25, 2009)

**Sermon Text:** Romans 3:27-28

*<sup>27</sup> Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. <sup>28</sup>For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.*

**Sermon Hymn:** N/A

**Prayer:** Let us live joyfully in this new life in Christ, not inhibited by fear or uncertainty to be before His throne.

**Sermon Outline:**

- I. Free from pretense.
- II. Free from shame.
- III. Free to live unmasked.

Grace, mercy, and peace to each of you from our Heavenly Father who sent His Son, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

You don't have to live in this world very long, you don't have to have a whole lot of experience in life, to realize there is a whole lot of boasting going on in this world. I think we become so used to it we hardly recognize it's happening. The clothes we wear, the cars we drive (or want to drive), the houses we live in and how we decorate them, and the people we want to be associated with. Let's admit it, we all like to have a little bit of edge over at least few other people. So, we boast in the way we act, by what we say, and by what we try to possess. And, again, we have become so used to it we hardly recognize this is our desire.

This can really happen with believers like any of us. We're here this morning, doing our weekly worship. Doesn't that make us a little better than those who are not here, who might be sitting at home, or doing something “fun” this morning?

Our second reading, from Romans, chapter 8, Paul speaks of this very thing, boasting. I'll read to verse 27 again, “*Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded.*” Sounds to me, Paul is saying that boasting has no part in the life of a true believer in Jesus Christ.

Let's consider what Paul is getting at in this way. In the Book of Romans, beginning at chapter 2, verse 18, there are 62 verses, 62 verses of Paul revealing that all are sinners and under the Law, ahead of our today's text. A simple break down of these verses shows something. Of those 62 verses, the first 15 are directed against Gentile sinners. After that, 47 verses are directed against the religious person. Might it just be that while all people are sinners, Paul really has a bone to pick with religious people? 62, 15, and 47, how easy it is for a 'religious' person to forget how desperate we really are for justification.

We see this in today's Gospel reading from John, chapter 8. Jesus speaking with the Jews, Jesus tells those who had believed in Him that He was the truth and that He as the truth will set them free. Free? They answered Jesus, "*We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, 'You will become free'?*" Jesus went on, "*Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin.*"

Paul was fully convinced of the truth Jesus was declaring to these Jews. Going back to Paul's 62 verses leading up today's text from the Book of Romans, Paul revealed the truth about Gentiles and 'religious' people. Between Gentile and religious person, that covers everyone, including every one of us, every one of us slaves to sin. Slaves to sin, I ask you now, where is our boasting now? Doesn't being slaves to sin make us all on a level playing field with all other people, regardless of whether they are in worship or not at this time?

Yes, no matter how religious any of us are, we are all in desperate need to for true, real, justification for our sin against our holy Creator.

To give some more thought to the conversation Jesus was having with those Jews, let's hear again how they responded to the truth of Jesus. "*We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, 'You will become free'?*" Consider what they said to Jesus this way. They were living under the pretense that, since they were blood descendants of Abraham, a faithful and justified man, they were 'religious' people, free and right. A pretense, that is a disguise, a front. Really, their decadency from Abraham was something they were hiding behind. And, that being something they were hiding behind had become something they were boasting of, and that gave them at least a little bit of edge over others in the view of Jesus, didn't it?

Denying the truth of what our Lord tells us about what is in the very core of our being, sin, is untruthful to ourselves, to others, and to our Lord. "*If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.*" But, we have got to have that edge, that advantage, over others around us.

Oh, hey, wait a minute. This is Reformation Sunday. Isn't this a time for any good Lutheran pastor to give a sermon recognizing the efforts and success of the Doctor Martin Luther? He was a smart guy, very intelligent. Many in the world who know anything about world history recognize him as one of the most influential in history. And, sure, we remember a lot of the events of that time period involving Luther, the Diet of Worms, Wittenberg, Wartburg, the 95 Thesis, and the famous quote "Here I Stand, I can do no other." Certainly, Martin Luther was a 'religious' man. And, if you look at Luther in any other way, besides the way our Lord, Jesus Christ, looked at him, you would think he certainly had an edge over others, and certainly had a lot of reason to boast. You could say Martin Luther could have easily had the pretense of being an upright, good, and 'religious' man. If Luther were alive today he could have a lot of reason to say to others, "I am Martin Luther, look at me. Look at all I accomplished. I was a huge influence on many in the world."

Yet, if we take what Jesus said to those Jews seriously, and what Paul wrote to those Rome, we realize that Martin Luther was on the same level playing field anyone else is. That is, he too, was a sinner, under the Law, deserving of eternal punishment, and in desperate need of justification before the Lord of Heaven and

Earth. And, friends, this was revealed to Luther the very same way it is revealed to anyone, in the Words of our Lord. And, this is exactly what Luther worked to direct others to, the truth, the reality, of everyone's desperation for justification.

Let's consider this now. Paul wrote to the Romans, and to many others. He taught, He proclaimed Law and Gospel. Luther did the same. He translated the entire Bible into a language that others could understand. He taught and he proclaimed Law and Gospel. Both he and Paul did it all in the name of the Lord, Jesus Christ. Now, Jesus taught, and He proclaimed Law and Gospel to many. The difference between Paul and Luther and Jesus- Paul and Luther did what they did to direct people's attention to someone else besides themselves and that was Jesus. Jesus taught and proclaimed what He did to direct attention upon Himself. Another difference, Paul and Luther were both sinners from the core of their beings, Jesus was sinless and perfect. Paul and Luther were both in desperate need of justification before the Lord, and Jesus wanted to give it to them.

The reason Jesus was there with those Jews that day revealing to them their enslavement to sin, was that He wanted, He so wanted them to know Him as their Savior from that enslavement. He wanted them to know they didn't have to hide their sinful selves from Him, He already knew. He wanted them to know and to be confident in Him that He was there to suffer and die so they could be free from any need to live under the pretense that they were 'religious.' What Paul did, what Luther did, they did so others may know and be confident of what Jesus wants to give all slaves to sin, freedom.

Luther and Paul, and we all realize, it's been revealed to us, we have no reason at all to boast. But we have every reason to confess with all others before the Lord our guilt, our shame. We are all in desperate need of justification before the Lord. And, the Lord, has been willing, and always will be willing to give us that justification. That is why He went through with His Father's plan for Him to suffer horribly and die so we could be free from what we deserve.

Free from any false need for pretense and free from shame before the Lord.

And, friends, that is what we are- free. It is correct to say nothing comes for free, but we are free. A price had to be paid so we could be free, and that price was Jesus' blood and life.

Yes, Jesus said so Himself, we are free from the condemnation of the Law, the guilt and the shame the Law makes reality in our lives.

When it comes down to it, it's all about Jesus, only Jesus. It's not about us, not about Luther, not about Paul. It's all about Jesus. Jesus said this Himself. Paul and Luther only wanted to lead others to be confident of what Jesus said about Himself, and that is that He is our justifier. Jesus the Justifier. Who brings us to freedom from enslavement and our shame. And, that is what He has done.

So, freedom from, but...to what? A couple of weeks back I delivered a sermon titled: "*In Jesus- Oppression becomes Opportunity.*" I believe it fits in well here. Isn't that what Jesus did for all, to bring us all not only from enslavement but freedom to serve Him? In fact He did. We no longer have to pretend we obey His Law, but we may boldly step before our Lord's throne, drop to our knees, and confess that we do a poor job

at it. And, we may, without fear, ask our Lord to direct us, guide us, and increase our desire to serve Him in all the ways He wants us to.

That's what Jesus was revealing to those Jews. That He was there with them, to free them up from what keeps them from joyfully serving Him, the Lord of all. That is what He wants us to be confident in, that He has freed us up so we may serve Him with happiness and joy. That is what Paul wanted others to be confident in. That is what Luther wanted others to be confident in. Confident in the Lord, Jesus Christ, and His Promise of freedom in Him.

Talk about Reformation. That is what our observance of the Reformation is all about- Jesus. Jesus the justifier who gives us the freedom to look upon His commands for our lives in happiness and joy. It truly is all about Jesus. That's why we are here, that's why we continue to come here. To hear Him, to receive Him, He who has freed us and keeps us free. He who reformed us from pretentious, shameful sinners into justified, forgiven, sinners who are confident in His Promise to us.

What's this mean for our lives friends? You know it's not just about our time in weekly worship. It's our entire lives and everything in our lives. The life of freedom we live and enjoy is Jesus' life. We are His possession, and that includes everything about us, what we say, what we do. Yes, living according to His will for our lives is a life lived in true freedom.

Our lives are all about Jesus, and who He says He is to the world- the Justifier. Someone asked Jesus once, *"Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?"* Jesus answered, *"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments (Jesus says) depend all the Law and the Prophets."*

Could it possibly be friends, that our lives here on earth are all about Jesus? Yes. And, if our lives are all about Jesus, wouldn't that mean that our lives are all about loving the Lord and loving our neighbors by proclaiming and sharing Jesus the Justifier? About using our lives, the lives He has won and given to us, to bring Jesus to everyone we possibly can? Absolutely.

Have you ever been in the hospital for treatment or tests? Many of us have been. And, if you were, you know about all the wires they hook up to you. Those wires are connected to devices made to read what is going on inside of you. What if there was some sort of device that read what is truly in our hearts? Being hooked up to a device like that would make us want to hide. We wouldn't want others to know our deepest thoughts in our minds and desires in our hearts. We wouldn't even want to know about those ourselves. That would be hurtful to our ability to boast. Instead we sinners like to live as if we have a mask over our faces to make others believe we really aren't that bad, and that we are 'religious' people. After Adam and Eve committed the first sin they hid in the Garden. No need friends, Jesus said so Himself. He knows what's inside of us. Better than we do ourselves. What's amazing is that all the while He knew all that, He still wanted to suffer and die for us. And, since He went through with it we are free to live without masks. Free to openly confess, 'Yes, we are sinners,

but free to serve our Lord who saved us.’ And, now our lives are all about sharing Jesus who saves sinners just like us.

Friends, He has given us life, the only life that exists. It is a life of freedom, free to do with that life what He desires us to do, all the while living with our eyes, minds, and hearts, upon Him. And, with Him saying to us, “please share with others who I am.” And, we responding, “Lord, we would love to do that for you.” Friends, we are free to boast, to boast in the Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.